

Give thanks for Answered prayer

Christians in the Middle East are finding new hope, thanks to everyone taking part in the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign. God is working through your faithful prayers and support to impact governments, challenge world leaders and strengthen believers in Iraq and Syria.

Since the *Hope for the Middle East* petition - signed by over 800,000 people from around the world - was presented to the UN, the USA and the UK governments in December, a lot has changed:

- **Governments are giving.** The USA and the UN released \$55m to help religious minorities rebuild in Iraq. Open Doors was one of 12 organisations consulted on how to spend it. The UK is seeking to involve Iraqi religious minorities in reconciliation programmes and to get their insight on policy – Open Doors recently convened a round table with Iraqi religious leaders and influencers and the Minister for the Middle East. Open Doors' colleagues around the world are meeting with their governments, urging them to answer the calls of the petition.
- **World leaders are supporting.** The UN Secretary General has publicly expressed concern for Christians in Iraq and Syria. Prime Minister Theresa May has twice referenced her meeting with Father Daniel from Iraq and committed to doing more to help believers in the Middle East. Over 40 MEPs have supported the establishment of a National Accountability Mechanism to document crimes against Christians in Iraq.
- **Lives are being restored.** Through Open Doors' local partners, over 900 homes have been restored in the Nineveh Plains in Iraq (Noeh's home is almost restored too – see him pictured above!), jobs have been created in Iraq and Syria, and over 5,000 Christians are receiving daily messages of encouragement.

We are so thankful to God for everyone who is giving, praying and speaking out to make this change possible. Much more still needs to be done – but the church in Iraq and Syria has not given up, and neither must their global church family!

As the war drags on in Syria, Open Doors' church partners are courageously continuing their vital work, feeding thousands of desperate families who have been left with nothing. In Iraq, church leaders are playing a key role in helping families to return home and rebuild their lives.



Noeh on his new bike in Karamles, near to his house that is under re-construction.

The church is there for the long-haul, restoring hope in a desperate situation. Please continue to stand alongside them with your prayers and support. To find out how you can get involved, read the leaflet enclosed with your magazine or go to www.opendoorsuk.org/syria

PRAY

- For further opportunities for Open Doors to engage with governments around the world and contribute to policy that will benefit Christians in Iraq and Syria
- For the EU to see the need for a National Accountability Mechanism in Iraq and that the Iraqi government will open up to the idea of wider accountability
- For Open Doors' partners continuing to support the most vulnerable believers in Iraq and Syria with relief aid, trauma support and help to rebuild their homes.



Noeh (CENTRE) presenting the global petition to Kyoko Shiotani (Chief of Office at the Office of the UN Under-Secretary-General).

WORLD WATCH LIST

25 NEPAL



A Christian couple have been deported from Nepal after they were accused of 'proselytism'.

According to *The Himalayan Times*, De Vera Richard from the Philippines and his Indonesian wife Rita Gongga had been staying in Nepal on business visas and were running a restaurant, but were also reportedly pastors of a church in Lalitpur, a city south of the capital Kathmandu. Following a complaint lodged with the Ministry of Home Affairs, an investigation was launched which found that the couple were working as pastors at Every Nation Church in Kumaripati, Lalitpur, and 'were converting Hindus into Christians'.

Proselytism is a crime in Nepal and carries a punishment of up to five years in prison and a fine of 50,000 Rupees (£350).

The rise in Hindu nationalism in India has spilled over into Nepal, which leapt into the 2018 Open Doors World Watch List at number 25. Last October, Nepali president Bidhya Devi Bhandari signed into law a bill criminalising religious conversion and the 'hurting of religious sentiment'. At the time, two parliamentarians warned that religious freedom in Nepal was 'teetering on the edge'.

Source: *World Watch Monitor*

PRAY

Father God, strengthen Your church in Nepal as it faces increasing opposition. Protect and encourage new believers who have left Hinduism to follow You. Sustain those imprisoned for sharing their faith in You – may they be swiftly released. Give boldness to those speaking out for religious freedom and move the hearts of those in power to show favour to Your people. Thank You that Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom that can never be destroyed.

PRAY THROUGH THE WORLD WATCH LIST

Sign up for weekly emails and we will send you a written prayer for a country on the List each week along with prayer requests from the persecuted church. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org



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OpenDoors

prayer diary
60 years of serving persecuted Christians

September 2018



"GOD'S KINGDOM WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED, AND HIS RULE WILL NEVER END."

Daniel 6:26

PRAY

India



Saturday 1 September

India has risen to number 11 on the Open Doors World Watch List – its highest ever position. Persecution is particularly violent, with nearly 24,000 Christians physically attacked for their faith last year. Pray for courage and protection for believers, especially those from a Hindu background.

Sunday 2 September

The militant Hindu nationalist group RSS has declared publicly that it intends to make India free of Christians and Muslims by 31 December 2021. Pray that the church in India will be emboldened by Jesus' promise: "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)."

Monday 3 September

The Indian government, led by the Hindu Nationalist BJP party, believes that being a Hindu is part of Indian identity, and often turns a blind eye to attacks on minorities. Ask God to open their eyes to see the valuable contribution that Christians and other minorities make to Indian society.

Tuesday 4 September

Church leader Tilak and his family had to flee their village after he was beaten and his family threatened with death because he led 40 families to receive Jesus (see Magazine p9-10). Give thanks that he was able to attend persecution survival training run by Open Doors partners. Pray for healing from trauma.

Wednesday 5 September

Praise God that sisters Meena* and Sunita*, who were beaten and expelled from their village for following Jesus, have been able to open a shop in another village that gives them enough income to support themselves. "Thanks to your prayers and support, our lives are so much better now," says Meena. "Most of all, we've gained a worldwide family that looks after us."



Thursday 6 September

Pray for a Christian family in northeast India who are under house arrest. Until now, no-one has been able to reach them because of strong opposition from Hindu extremists in the village. Ask God to provide a way out from this situation.

Friday 7 September

As persecution increases, Open Doors is aiming to double its impact, working through local church partners to strengthen the Indian church through training, relief aid, practical support and advocacy. Ask the Lord to provide for His people through the prayers and generosity of the church around the globe.

*Name changed for security reasons

Asia



Saturday 8 September – Bangladesh

Earlier this year, authorities and Muslim extremists carried out a major crackdown on believers from a Muslim background. Many have received death threats. Pray for protection for these believers, for resilient faith and boldness in sharing the gospel.

Sunday 9 September – Bangladesh

Eusuf (21) is a new believer who is attending an Open Doors discipleship training course. "I don't want to go back (to my former religion)," he says. "Those who know of my conversion have been troubling me, but I depend on God and believe He will protect me. So pray for God to help me. Pray also for my wife's salvation."

Monday 10 September – Bangladesh

Pray for Rijina (35), a widow with one son who lives in extreme poverty and is often harassed by her community for leaving Islam to follow Jesus. Despite these struggles, she remains committed to Jesus and now teaches an Open Doors literacy class where she is able to earn an income. Ask the Lord to bless and prosper her work.

Tuesday 11 September – Maldives

There are reports of increasing spiritual openness in the country. Pray for opportunities for the gospel to be shared and ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of many Maldivians to see the glory of Jesus.

Wednesday 12 September – Sri Lanka

Open Doors provides biblical resources to Bible school students and pastors to help them in their studies and in their ministry to their communities. Pray that these resources will equip them to understand and teach God's Word effectively.

Thursday 13 September – Bhutan

Pray for Mrs. Ran*, a believer from southern central Bhutan, who is continuously mocked for her faith by her husband's family and was recently beaten by her husband for not denying Christ. Praise God for her courage and ask the Lord to be her fortress and deliverer.

Friday 14 September – Pakistan

Pray for a seminar taking place today to teach local Christians about the importance of prayer. Pray that those who attend will be emboldened in prayer and ask God to use them to strengthen the prayer life of their churches and communities.

Saturday 15 September – Pakistan

Pray for political stability following July's contested elections. Pray that the new government will govern with wisdom and justice and ask God to move their hearts to do more to protect Pakistan's minorities, including Christians.

PRAY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Sunday 16 September – Lebanon

Praise God for the relative stability there is here and for the opportunities the Lebanese church has to serve the many refugees in the country. Ask the Lord to continue to give church leaders compassion to reach out to the most needy.

Monday 17 September – Syria

Although Islamic State has largely been driven out of Syria, the war is not over and continued insecurity, lack of work and rising food prices have caused many to leave the country. Pray for Open Doors' local church partners supporting those who have been left behind – the elderly, the sick, those with young families – with vital relief aid.

Tuesday 18 September – Syria

Fighting continues in some areas of the country and people are still being killed on a daily basis. Pray that all involved in this war – the rebel groups, the Syrian government and army, foreign governments who send troops to Syria – will work towards peace and reconciliation.

Wednesday 19 September – Syria

In some areas, Syrians have returned to their home towns. Pray for courage and perseverance for those who have gone back to ruined and burnt-out homes and cities, and pray for wisdom for Open Doors' partners helping people to get back on their feet through rehabilitation programmes.

Thursday 20 September – Iraq

At the time of writing, there is still no new government in place following May's elections. Pray for a stable government to be formed that will bring peace and unity to the country.

Friday 21 September – Iraq

Thank God that almost 9,000 families have returned to the towns and villages in the Nineveh Plain after years of displacement. Pray that they will be able to restart their lives there and for enough job opportunities to sustain them.

Saturday 22 September – Iraq

Give thanks that Christina (6), who was kidnapped by Islamic State in 2014 and was returned to her family last summer, is doing well. She now lives with her parents in Qaraqosh and finished her school year with success. Her health is very good and she has learned to speak Syriac, the language of her family and community. (After time away from her family she only spoke Arabic.)

Sunday 23 September – Iraq

Open Doors supports income-generating projects through our local partners in Iraq which help provide work for many people. Pray for wisdom for those who decide which projects to support as they study the project proposals they receive.

China



Monday 24 September

As the Chinese government ramps up its demands for China's house churches to register with the authorities, pastors are under increasing pressure to meet with officials to account for their movements and to inform on church members. Pray for courage to stand firm in the faith and wisdom to know how to answer the authorities.

Tuesday 25 September

The government is tightening its control in western China. Some foreign and local missionaries have been forced to leave and a number of house churches have been ordered to stop meeting. Ask God to strengthen local Buddhist-background believers to continue sharing the gospel despite increasing restrictions.

Wednesday 26 September

Abliz, a believer from a Muslim background, was detained by the authorities in 2017 but has never returned home. Pray for his wife who is struggling to bring in an income to provide for her children, and pray that Abliz will be released.

Thursday 27 September

Daniel* is translating the Old Testament into an ethnic Buddhist minority language. He was recently interrogated by local authorities who suspect his involvement in the work. He was released after a few days but remains under surveillance, so translation work is suspended. Ask God to provide a way for the work to continue.

Friday 28 September

As the Chinese church again divides into smaller, more numerous gatherings, there is an urgent need for senior pastors to equip and release new leaders to teach and nurture Christians in their homes. Ask God to raise up a young generation of leaders who will rise to the challenge and usher in a new era of church growth.

Saturday 29 September

Open Doors supports churches in China by organising training and forums for youth leaders. This year, youth leaders are being extremely cautious due to warnings from local authorities about convening unauthorised activities. Pray for their protection and pray that Open Doors' support will bring encouragement to these young leaders.

Sunday 30 September – UK and Ireland

Many Open Doors supporters will be using our *Can You Believe It?* pack to inspire their churches and small groups with true-life stories of faith, hope and love from the persecuted church over the autumn. Ask God to use the testimonies of our persecuted family to revive the church in our nations and give Christians greater boldness in their witness for Him.